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# *Opinião* 50 years after...

## *Opinião* 50 anos depois...

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**Abstract:** On the 11th December 1964, the musical *Opinião* directed by Augusto Boal premiered at the 'Teatro Arena' in Rio de Janeiro. The show was considered a protest against the socioeconomic situation in Brazil and became a reference to what would be known as protest music against the regime, which established itself in Brazil in March that same year. In this text, we will attempt to analyse how this show substantiated the various social and political demands at the time, and how it became an aesthetic and political paradigm. At the same time, we will compare the original production with a re-interpretation of the spectacle in 2014, organized by the Moreira Salles Institute, with the participation of the group Casuarina and the singer Joyce. The aim is to understand how, fifty years after the coup d'état and the show *Opinião*, Brazilian music and art not only reflect that historical moment, but also its role in the contemporary socio-political context.

**Keywords:** Show *Opinião*; Theater of the Oppressed; Brazilian Music; Brazilian Theater; Military coup.

**Resumo:** A 11 de dezembro de 1964 estreava o espetáculo musical *Opinião*, no Teatro Arena no Rio de Janeiro, dirigido por Augusto Boal. O show foi considerado um manifesto de protesto contra as condições socioeconômicas do Brasil e se tornou referência ao que se passou a chamar música de protesto contra o regime instaurado em março daquele mesmo ano no Brasil. Neste texto buscamos analisar como este show substanciou as diversas demandas sociais e políticas do Brasil naquele momento e se torna um paradigma estético e político. Ao mesmo tempo, comparamos aquela produção histórica com a reinterpretação do espetáculo em 2014, promovida pelo Instituto Moreira Salles, com a participação do grupo Causarina e da cantora Joyce. O objetivo é buscar entender como, passados 50 anos do golpe de estado e do show *Opinião*, a música e a arte brasileira refletem não apenas aquele momento histórico, mas também seu papel no contexto sócio-político contemporâneo.

**Palavras-chave:** Show *Opinião*; Teatro do Oprimido; Música Brasileira; Teatro Brasileiro; Golpe militar.

On the 11th December 1964, the musical *Opinião*, directed by Augusto Boal, made its debut at the 'Teatro Arena' in Rio de Janeiro. The cast consisting of João do Vale, Zé Kéti and Nara Leão (later substituted by Maria Bethânia), combined songs, narrations and dialogues, with text by Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and Paulo Pontes. The production was considered a protest against the socioeconomic situation in Brazil and became a reference to what would be known as protest music against the regime, which established itself in Brazil in March that same year. In this text, we will attempt to analyse how this show substantiated the various social and political demands at the time, and how it became an aesthetic and political paradigm. At the same time, we will compare the original production with a re-interpretation of the spectacle in 2014, organized by the Moreira Salles Institute, with the participation of the group Casuarina and the singer Joyce. The aim is to understand how, fifty years after the coup d'état and the show *Opinião*, Brazilian music and art not only reflect that historical moment, but also its role in the contemporary socio-political context.

The decades of 1950 and 1960 in Brazil were a time of great cultural creativity and effervescence. Not only the wealth and diversity of musical, theatrical and literary production were remarkable, but also the dialogue between the arts and politics was another defining element of this period. It was also a period of great national transformations, and at the same time that modernization and urbanization seemed to indicate a time of optimism, political and social problems were growing. Rural exodus led to an increase in the segregated urban population and the dichotomy between rich and poor worsened. As well as this, strong political polarization and instability reflected the conflict between developmentalists, nationalists, communists and the radical right.

Alongside this turbulence, thought and praxis produced a unique expression inspired by a new concept, the 'oppressed', which would be the protagonist of a series of political and artistic expressions: 'Cinema Novo' (or 'New Cinema'), the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, Liberation Theology, theatre of the oppressed, etc. The awareness of class conflict exposed to this movement, neither coordinated nor close-knit, would leave definitive traces in Brazilian culture.

From the second half of the 1950s, Brazilian theatre already began to experience the provocative dialogue between art and politics. One indication of this period was the play "They Don't Wear Black-Tie", by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, in 1958, in the Teatro Arena of São Paulo. The theatre was socially and politically engaged, and aimed to educate the working classes. At the beginning of the 1960s, other important initiatives of the same orientation would enrich the scene, such the Theatre of Popular Culture (TCP), part of the Popular Culture Movement (MCP), under the government of Miguel Arraes in Pernambuco, as well as the Centre of Popular Culture (CPC) of the National Student Union (UNE) in Rio de Janeiro. These initiatives aimed for the education and mobilization of those people bound for revolutionary transformations.

The initial and apparent tolerance of this kind of theatre is owed to the fact that despite the 'oppressed' being the protagonist, the artists were initially isolated from the popular classes and only made the art for the middle class consumers of cultural pro-

duction, for which reason artists didn't represent any threat. According to Napolitano "A cultura passou a ser supervalorizada, até porque, bem ou mal, era um dos únicos espaços de atuação da esquerda politicamente derrotada" (2001: 49).<sup>1</sup> It is in this context that the show *Opinião* established itself as the embryo of what would be a broad front in the struggle for democratic freedoms through theatre.

## OPINIÃO

*Opinião*, written by Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and Paulo Pontes (dramatists linked to the theatre groups Arena and Oficina and who participated in the theatre groups of the CPCs of UNE) and directed by Augusto Boal (of the Teatro de Arena in São Paulo), and featuring artists Zé Kéti, João do Vale and Nara Leão (later replaced by Maria Bethânia), was produced after the coup of March, 1964, and premiered on 11<sup>th</sup> December that year in the 'Teatro Super Shopping Center'. The show was considered by many as the first artistic reaction to the coup. However, many of the social and political problems thematised by the show were already a reality before the coup.

É curioso observar, por exemplo, que tendo sido considerado "o primeiro protesto teatral contra a ditadura militar" de 1964, não há qualquer referência direta a este fato. É um protesto suprimindo uma falta de algo: a possibilidade de dizer. Um protesto, sim, ainda que sob a forma espontânea, simples e improvisada de uma *Opinião* (Künner/Rocha 2001: 46).<sup>2</sup>

Suggested following an idea of Vianinha's (Oduvaldo Vianna Filho), *Opinião* (whose name comes from a Samba of the same name by Zé Kéti) was greatly innovative in terms of musical and theatrical presentation. It presented a new model in which the singers fused song with speech, telling stories and giving opinions on social and political matters, even if subversively. This model was used later on in other shows such as *Liberdade*, *Liberdade* and *Arena Conta Zumbi*.

The three actors on the stage, Nara Leão, Zé Kéti and João do Vale, were themselves also characters, as their idea was precisely to show that there was common ground between a stereotypical girl from the South side, a character from the carioca suburbs and a northeastern Brazilian, who found their professional activities in music (Cabral 2001: 87).

<sup>1</sup> "The culture came to be overvalued, even because, for good or bad, it was one of the only areas of expertise of the politically defeated left."

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to observe, for example, that having been considered "the first theatrical protest against the military dictatorship" of 1964, there is no direct reference to this fact. It is a protest suppressing a lack of something: the possibility of speaking. A protest, still, even if as spontaneous, simple and improvised as an *Opinião* (Opinion).

The show was conceived of in Zicartola, a restaurant belonging to samba artist and composer Cartola and his partner Zica, where meetings took place between musicians, artists, students and intellectuals, and that basically functioned as a cultural centre. The show led to the creation of the Opinião group, whose permanent members included: Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (Vianinha), Paulo Pontes, Armando Costa, João das Neves, Ferreira Gullar, Thereza Aragão, Denoy de Oliveira and Pichin Plá, as well as the theatrical space of the same name (cf: Costa/Pontes/Vianna Filho 1965; Paranhos 2012). Nara Leão was substituted, for health reasons, on the 13<sup>th</sup> January 1965 by Suzana de Moraes (daughter of the poet and composer Vinicius de Moraes) and, later, on the 13<sup>th</sup> February of the same year by Maria Bethânia (Costa/Pontes/Vianna Filho 1965), who gave a new and more solid character to the cast.

What indeed calls our attention is the original formation of the trio. The initial concept of the work was to choose artists, who represented an ‘alliance of classes’: a middle class carioca girl from Zona Sul (the wealthy South side of Rio de Janeiro), a Northeastern migrant, and an Afro-Brazilian from the peripheries of the city.

The arrival of Bethania called for alternations of the original text and in the actual dynamic of the show. In an interview with Dori Caymmi, who at 21 years of age directed the musical of the show and played in the show’s band, mentions the arrival of Bethania: “Olha, eu acho que do ponto de vista estético mudou porque a Bethânia era mais cantora e mais teatral do que a Nara”.<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to compare this statement with that of Caetano Veloso (Bethania’s brother) who commented on the show *Opinião* on his own book *Tropical Truth*.

In 1964 some months after the ‘revolution’ - that’s what the coup d’état that had brought the military government to power was officially called - *Opinião* had brought together a composer from the hills of Rio de Janeiro (Zé Kéti), a composer from the rural Northeast (João do Rio), and a bossa nova singer from Rio’s Zona Sul (Nara Leão) in a small repertory theatre in Copacabana, which combined the charm of a nightclub bossa nova shows with the excitement of politically engaged theater. *Opinião* epitomized the trend among some the *bossanovistas* to promote the fusion of modern Brazilian music with politically engaged art. Vinicius de Moraes himself, bossa nova’s first and for most lyricist, was involved in the effort; and around this time Brazil created perhaps the most graceful protest songwriting in the world. [...] This kind of show became one of the most influential forms of expression in the subsequent history of MPB (Veloso 2002: 43).

Caetano underlines the importance of Nara’s participation in the establishment of an aesthetic bridge between the different musical expressions at the time, especially in an environment that was sometimes hostile to bossa nova, which was considered petit-bourgeois. Indeed, the title of the show was inspired by Zé Kéti’s song, which was recorded by Nara in November 1964 on an LP, called *Opinião de Nara* (Nara’s

<sup>3</sup> “Well, I think that from an aesthetic point of view it changed because Bethania was more of a singer and more theatrical than Nara.” Caymmi in interview conducted 2014 via email by the author of this text.

Opinion). Sergio Cabral confirms that Oduvaldo Vianna Filho heard the album even before its release and

entusiasmou-se tanto que viu nele a fonte para um show que marcaria a estreia do teatro em Copacabana, que ele e sete companheiros do tempo do Centro Popular de Cultura queriam inaugurar ainda em 1964. Seria um espetáculo envolvendo Nara Leão, João do Vale e Zé Kéti (Cabral 2001: 85).<sup>4</sup>

The setup of the show *Opinião*, in the form of an arena and without a setting, with nothing but a platform for a stage for the three singer-actors, is a fundamental characteristic of the show, as by definition it brings together artist and audience. This format is entirely according to the premise of the Theatre of the Oppressed, by Augusto Boal, who co-directed the show. According to his concept, the separation of actor and spectator should be banned, as a way of breaking with an imposing structure, typical of the darkened auditorium and proscenium arch theatre. In his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal says:

‘Spectator’ is a bad word! The spectator is less than a man and it is necessary to humanize him, to restore to him his capacity of action in all its fullness. He too must be a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those generally accepted as actors, who must also be spectators. All these experiments of a people’s theatre have the same objective —the liberation of the spectator, on whom the theatre has imposed finished visions of the world (Boal 2008: 134-135).

The shape of the arena therefore, still in keeping with Boal, would be the most popular for this break of the distinction between spectator and actor, as it places everyone on the same level and permits a more explicit sensory communion, as well as social equality.

The theory behind this engaged theatre was present in the concept that all art is imbued with a political position and that the people are the protagonist. The theatre, therefore, is a space for public reflection and inspiration for change, for union of the social classes. It is a privileged space in which to discuss the reality of repressed popular classes.

In this way, *Opinião* created a moment of political debate in an atmosphere where it was already censored and repressed. The show was a great success, mostly among the student and middle class audiences, who seemed to have identified the show as a form of protest against the political situation of the country, and lived in a collective moment of catharsis and sublimation, experiencing a sense of victory that wasn’t possible in real life (Araújo 2007; Paranhos 2012). Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves noticing how *Opinião* was a milestone for

<sup>4</sup> “He was so enthusiastic in it that he saw the source of a show that would mark the premier of theatre in Copacabana, that he and seven colleagues at the time from the Centro Popular de Cultura wanted to inaugurate even in 1964. It would be a show involving Nara Leão, João do Vale and Zé Kéti.”

post-64 culture, stating that: “Tratava-se de uma primeira resposta ao golpe” (Hollanda/Golçalves 1982: 22-23).<sup>5</sup>

The show’s success (25,000 spectators in Rio de Janeiro) obviously provoked reactions, due to both its aesthetic composition and its rebellious content. Sergio Cabral was the most enthusiastic of journalists in defending the show:

Opinião foi um magnífico espetáculo. Se os seus autores não foram inteiramente bem-sucedidos na pretensão de mudar o país, mudaram, sem dúvida, o teatro musical brasileiro. Era algo inteiramente novo, e seria difícil dizer quem mais inovou, se os autores ou o diretor. A crítica foi quase toda favorável (Cabral 2001: 87).<sup>6</sup>

Journalists like Mario Cabral (from the *Tribuna de Imprensa*) and Yan Michalski (of *Journal do Brasil*), the most important critic in Rio at the time, were quite positive in their reviews of the show. The negative criticisms came from names such as José Ramos Tinhorão and Sérgio Bittencourt (of *Correio da Manhã*). Initially, Tinhorão, the most poignant of the critics, established an acid debate with Sergio Cabral about the music choices of the piece and mocked what he considered a pseudo-nationalism of the repertoire and of the artists. In a text to the *Diário Carioca* on the 28th December 1964, entitled “A Mistaken Opinion,” Tinhorão attacks:

Por que insistem, então, os responsáveis pelas diretrizes culturais da classe média brasileira, e particularmente carioca, em mais uma tentativa de apropriar-se da cultura popular? Insistem, como das outras vezes, por idealismo. Embora muitos dos orientadores da moderna tendência à comunhão com a cultura popular tenham as suas tinturas de marxismo, a sua ingenuidade é evidente.

O “show” *Opinião*, por exemplo, parece querer dar a impressão — pelas entrelinhas do seu texto cuidadoso — de uma tentativa de reação à política de coelhinho assustado instaurada pela Revolução de Abril. Segundo os defensores desse idealismo, o “show” *Opinião* é a mais séria tentativa de despertar a consciência nacional do povo, através de uma espécie de propaganda subliminar oferecida com o atrativo da boa música popular. É como decorrência desse princípio e dentro desse esquema que Nara Leão vai gravar baiões (Tinhorão, 1964: s/p).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “It was the first response to the coup.”

<sup>6</sup> “*Opinião* was a magnificent show. Though the actors weren’t totally successful in their intentions to change the country, they certainly changed Brazilian musical theatre. It was something totally new, and it would be difficult to say whether it was the actors or the director that was the most innovative. The critics were almost all favourable.”

<sup>7</sup> “Why must those responsible for Brazil’s middle-class cultural trends, especially those from Rio, insist on yet another attempt to assimilate popular culture? They insist, once again, on idealism. While many of the trend-setters of this modern tendency to participate with popular culture have their hints of Marxism, their ingenuity is evident.

*Opinião*, for example, seems to want to give the impression - through interlineations of careful text - of a deer caught in the headlights with their attempt to react to the politics of the Revolution of April. According to defenders of its idealism, *Opinião* is the most serious attempt to bring about the peoples’ national consciousness through a kind of subliminal propaganda offered with the attraction of good popular music. It is as a result of this principle and within this frame that Nara Leão records baiões.”

Despite the great success of the show *Opinião*, the artists, especially Nara Leão, not only had to deal with the heavy critique of the show by the media, but also the reception of sectors associated with the military regime, and even heated discussions with members of the audience. “Houve noites em que Nara interrompia o show para discutir com pessoas que passavam o tempo todo provocando os artistas, com uma especial preferência por ela, mocinha da Zona Sul preocupada com as injustiças sociais” (Cabral 2001: 89).<sup>8</sup>

## THE REPERTOIRE

*Opinião*'s repertoire was made up of different composers' works, with a lot of Samba, Baião, and Bossa Nova, genres that were directly associated with the artists on the stage. Many songs were by Zé Kéti and João do Vale themselves, making the show a way of spreading the work of these artists too, as well as expressing the difficulties of dealing with life in the periphery, be it in the countryside (the *Sertão*) or in an urban area (*Morro* or *Favela*). The other songs were by Carlos Lyra, Vinicius de Moraes, Newton Teixeira, Tom Jobim, Francisco de Assis and Edu Lobo, artists associated with the same causes defended by the artists on stage. The show therefore incorporated the concept that was consolidated by MPB (Música Popular Brasileira - or Popular Brazilian Music). In the words of the writers::

a música popular é tanto mais expressiva quanto mais tem uma opinião, quando se alia ao povo na captação de novos sentimentos e valores necessários para a evolução social; quando mantém vivas as tradições de unidade e integração nacionais. A música popular não pode ver o público como simples consumidor de música; ele é fonte e razão da música (Costa/Pontes/Vianna Filho 1965: 7).<sup>9</sup>

The complete list of songs is as follows:

- “Peça na Pimenta” – Adelino Rivera and João do Vale José Batista
- “Pisa na Fulô” – Ernesto Pires and João do Vale Silveira Júnior
- “Samba, Samba, Samba” – Zé Kéti
- “Partido alto” – Cartola e Heitor dos Prazeres
- “Boranda” – Edu Lobo
- “Desafio” – A dialogue taken from the book *Eu Sou o Cego Aderaldo*

<sup>8</sup> “There were nights in which Nara interrupted the show to argue with people that spent the whole time provoking the artists, who had taken to her, the south-side girl worried about social injustice.”

<sup>9</sup> “Popular music is so much more expressive when it has an opinion, when it allies itself with the people in capturing new feelings and values necessary to social evolution: when they keep national traditions of unity and integration alive. Popular music cannot see the public as a simple consumer of music; it is the source of reason for music.”



- “Missa Agrária” – Carlos Lyra Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, a sample from the musical piece
- “Carcará” – João do Vale José Cândido
- “O Favelado” – Zé Kéti
- “Nêga Dina” – Zé Kéti
- “Incelança” – Northeastern folklore
- “Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol” – Glauber Rocha and Sérgio Ricardo
- “Guantanamera” – Pete Seeger
- “Canção do Homem só” – Carlos Lyra and Vinicius de Moraes
- “Sina de Caboclo” – João do Vale and Jocastra Bezerra de Aquino
- “Opinião” – Zé Kéti
- “Malmequer” – Cristóvão de Alencar
- “Marcha de Rio 40 Graus” – Zé Kéti
- “Malvadeza Durão” – Zé Kéti
- “Esse Mundo é meu” – Ruy Guerra and Sérgio Ricardo
- “Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol” – Glauber Rocha and Sérgio Ricardo
- “Marcha da Quarta-Feira de Cinzas” – Carlos Lyra and Vinicius de Moraes
- “Tiradentes” – Ary Toledo and Chico de Assis
- “Cicatriz” – Zé Kéti and Hermínio Bello de Carvalho

The show’s script is like patchwork, containing music and testimony, the presentation of data and historical references, everything permeated by criticisms of the reality of Brazilian society. The testimonials are real, the life stories of the artists on the stage represented a reality of living exclusion, a reality for the majority of Brazilian society at the beginning of the 1960s. As well as this, the testimonies brought to the stage “a personificação de três diferentes esferas sociais: do favelado, do retirante e da elite engajada, representadas respectivamente por Zé Kéti, João do Vale e Nara Leão” (Mendes 2011).<sup>10</sup>

This was therefore the thematic foundation of the show: and alliance of social classes, denouncing and criticizing the social reality of the country. The most recurrent themes of the show are drought, rural exodus and cultural colonialism, as well as the underlying debate about the role of artists in the social revolution of Brazil. The use of statistics, for example, as in “Carcará”, gave a critical weight and tone to the show, a strong characteristic of political theatre. Paranhos points out:

Podemos afirmar que o espetáculo não só focalizava como mistificava “novos lugares da memória: o morro (favela + miséria + periferia dos grandes centros urbanos industrializados) e o sertão (populações famintas, [...] o messianismo religioso [...] e o [...] coronelismo)”. Por meio da música, as interpretações e as discussões a respeito dessas realidades fluíam no espetáculo, alternando-se com depoimentos dos atores que compartilhavam, fora do palco, as mesmas dificuldades cantadas por eles, como nos casos de João do Vale (nor-

<sup>10</sup> “the personification of three different social spheres: the favelado, the migrant worker, and the committed elite, respectively represented by Zé Kéti, João do Vale and Nara Leão”.

destino retirante) e Zé Keti (morador de uma favela carioca). Já Nara Leão —conhecida como a musa da bossa nova, que personalizava a classe média— assumia uma postura de engajamento e posicionava-se de forma ativa e questionadora diante da realidade brasileira (Paranhos 2012: 143-144).<sup>11</sup>

There was, therefore, an alliance on the stage: Nara Leão representing the political middle-class and bossa nova, considered by many as music of the elite; Zé Keti representing the carioca from the hills and root Samba; and João do Vale representing the migrant Northeasterner and Baião. In reference to the actors' lines, a rhetoric of exclusion is detectable, which is an important element to understanding the show: the general impression is that the three actor-singers would overcome the reality of the social class to which they belonged, being compelled to transform it. João do Vale is a Northeastern migrant worker who took off in the direction of the great urban centres in search of improving his life condition; Zé Keti plays Samba and lives in a favela, carrying the image of a marginal *malandro*, but through the use of his Sambas he is able to transition into a cultural elite, making a name for himself; Nara Leão, a middle-class Bossa Nova singer, seems to be living in voluntary exile, experiencing the communion that is the show's idealism (Mendes 2011).

In his memoirs, Boal gives his idealized version of the show *Opinião*:

Veio a estreia. A plateia aliada, parte essencial do espetáculo, gritava nosso canto, cantava nosso grito. *Opinião* éramos nós e a platéia!

*Opinião* foi o primeiro protesto teatral coerente, coletivo, contra a desumana ditadura que tanta gente assassinou, torturou, tanto o povo empobreceu, tanto destruiu o que antes chamávamos *Pátria*. Como coadjuvante sem cara —assim ficou o Brasil perdido no mundo, e nunca mais se levantou— gigante nocauteado em berço de miséria (Boal 2000: 228).<sup>12</sup>

According to Boal, the members of CPC in Rio, as well as those from Arena in São Paulo, were discussing which would be the best answer to the dictatorship. They found a point of convergence in the concept of true-show, a musical and theatrical performance in which the artists would tell their own histories.

<sup>11</sup> We can confirm that the show didn't just focus but also mystified "new places of memory: the hill (favela + misery + periphery of great industrial urban centres) and the sertão (famined populations, [...] religious messianism [...]) and [...] coronelism)". Through the medium of music, interpretations and discussions in relation to these realities flowed through the show, alternating with testimonies that the actors shared, off stage, the same difficulties sung by them, such as in the case of João do Vale (the migrant northeasterner) and Zé Keti (who lived in a carioca favela). Even Nara Leão - known as the muse of Bossa Nova, who personified the middle class - assumed a role of political engagement and took an active and questioning position in front of the Brazilian reality.

<sup>12</sup> "I saw the debut. The integrated audience, an essential part of the show, shouted our song, it sung our shouts. *Opinião* was us and the audience! *Opinião* was the first coherent theatrical collective protest against the inhumane dictatorship that killed and tortured so many of the impoverished people, that destroyed what we once called Patriotism. Like an adjutant without a face - this is how Brazil remained lost in the world, and never got up again - a giant knocked out in a cradle of misery."

A resistência contra a ditadura se organizava depois do susto. Nos meios intelectuais era ferrenho o repúdio aos militares e civis golpistas: subversivos que haviam liquidado a Legalidade. Inaugurou-se um restaurante intelecto-popular, Zicartola (Cartola e sua mulher, Zica) —que servia comida brasileira, música popular e inconformismos variados. Nara Leão conduzia alguns *shows* desse diálogo gastronômico-político-lítero-musical, com nomes consagrados, como o dela, e *revelações*: Zé Ketí e João do Vale. O grupo escolheu esses três artistas para o primeiro *show*. Começaram as entrevistas pessoais. Nosso antigo local da Siqueira Campos voltou a se chamar *Arena de São Paulo* (Boal 2000: 224).<sup>13</sup>

Boal reveals that Vianinha gave him three hundred pages of monologues, dialogues and lyrics, which would have been impossible to reproduce in their entirety. After discussions with other singers, the show was reduced. Dori Caymmi was the musical director, with a band formed of a guitar, drums and a flute. Everything was very simple and cheap: the stage was made of planks of wood, half a dozen reflectors, three microphones, and the costumes were everyday clothes. Boal reports:

Eu queria que escutasse não apenas a música, mas a ideia que se vestia de música! *Opinião* não seria um show a mais. Seria o primeiro show de uma nova fase. Show contra a ditadura, show-teatro. Grito, explosão. Protesto. Música só não bastava. Música ideia, combate, eu buscava: música corpo, cabeça, coração! Falando do momento, instante! (Boal 2000: 226).<sup>14</sup>

The show's script is divided into two parts. In the first part, there are many of João do Vale and Zé Keti's songs, where popular and traditional songs are predominant ("Partido alto", "Desafio", "Incelença"). It is in this first half that the artists introduce themselves and sing about various episodes of their lives with a characteristically comic tone. It is through these anecdotes that we clearly see their attempt to present themselves as representatives of distinct social classes, demonstrating that the show is a portrait of the Brazilian people. Only Nara Leão clashes with her middle class origin, but by showing her engagement and social consciousness. This introduction is how they make a pact to represent the protest arising from those different social layers that are discontent with the context in which they live.

<sup>13</sup> "The resistance against the dictatorship organized after the initial shock. In intellectual circles the disavowal of military and civil supporters was fierce: subversives that had sold out to Legality. An intellectual-popular restaurant, Zicartola (belonging to Cartola and his wife, Zica), which served Brazilian food, popular music and various other unconformities, opened. There, Nara Leão led some shows based on this gastronomic-political-literary-musical dialogue, starring well-known names, such as her own, and *revelacoes*: Zé Keti and João do Vale. The group chose these three names for the first show. They began personal interviews. Our old local in Siqueira Campos became known as Arena de Sao Paulo."

<sup>14</sup> "I didn't want just the music to be heard, but also the idea that was dressed up in the music! *Opinião* wouldn't be just another show. It would be the first show of a new era. A show against the dictatorship, a theatre-show. Scream, explosion. Protest. Music wasn't enough. A music of ideas, of combat was what I was looking for: music of the body, head, heart! Talking about the moment, of the there and then!"

In the second part, there are still testimonies, but another approach dominates, with more songs of protests, critics of industrial culture (such as the track “Canção do Homem Só”, for example), discussions about Brazilian culture (parts in which cinema is discussed, for example, when songs sung by Zé Kéti are based on theme songs of Brazilian films) and the dilemmas of the political artist. In this part, there are more references to Cinema Novo, to Bossa Nova, to ‘New Theatre’, and the importance of these movements is praised.

The themes sung about in the show make up a socio-historical panorama of the fundamental themes in the political debate of the time: drought, and its use by political leaders to buy votes; the problem of land distribution; the condition of the migrant, who becomes a worker in the South; the conflict between media sensationalism and reality; cultural colonialism; the situation of the national artist, between the pressures of colonialism and the market (Kühner/Rocha 2001).

The playwrights work to awaken the political consciousness of the audience, discussing Brazilian problems of the time, combining music and text and diluting the space between audience and stage.

The theme of rural exodus takes up some of the most heightened moments of this first part of the show, with stories from João do Vale and songs sung by Nara, especially “Borandá”, by Edu Lobo, and “Carcará”, by João do Vale himself. Before “Borandá”, there is an anecdote from João do Vale which fuses the relating of precarious living conditions in the drought-ridden regions of the North and Northeast of the country with an attack on the political coronelism in the region. It is this same actor that reads a letter that he sent to his father explaining the reasons for having migrated. Nara Leão sings a sample of “Missa Agrária” at the end, and then begins “Caracá” by João do Vale. The song has a great dramatic effect after the reading of the statistics by Nara Leão: “Até 1950, havia dois milhões de nordestinos vivendo fora de seus estados natais. 10% da população do Ceará emigrou, 13% do Piauí, mais de 15% da Bahia, 17% de Alagoas!” (Costa/Pontes/Vianna Filho, 1965: 39).<sup>15</sup> Zé Kéti always maintains his irreverent character during his interventions, mocking the political situation at the time.

The second part of the show begins with protest songs, among them the classic “Guantanamera”, with lyrics by Jose Marti, approaching themes such as the militancy of the working class and the repression of Cuban communism. In this part of the show, the question of cultural imperialism is discussed. At this point the musicians imitate American musical genres of the time, in a ridiculing manner, criticizing the foreign elements in Brazilian music. There are also lines in which national culture is given value, especially music and cinema.

The role that each character represents stands out: Nara Leão speaks about situations in cultural debate, Zé Kéti is the politicized comic and João do Vale responds to the most dramatic moment of the show.

<sup>15</sup> “Until 1950, there were two million Northeasterners living outside their home states. 10% of the population of Ceará migrated, 13% from Piauí, more than 15% from Bahia, 17% from Alagoas!”

Even with the substitution of Nara Leão for Bethânia, the show continues with immense success, having also been seen in other Brazilian cities. Without doubt it inaugurated a new form of artistic expression in Brazil and became a reference point of politically engaged protest art. The songs that made up the show became iconic of the time. While it didn't bring about the masses to a revolution, *Opinião* at least played a role in forming a notable social-political critique in the years following the show.

## 50 YEAR LATER

Remembering the 50th anniversary of the coup that installed the dictatorship and celebrating the 50 years of the show *Opinião*, the Moreira Sales Institute recreated the spectacle, inviting the singer Joyce and the group Casuarina to put together their own script and arrangements. The presentation took place on the 8th February 2014 in the Moreira Sales auditorium in Rio de Janeiro. Together with the mentioned artists, the critic and journalist Sergio Cabral, one of the great defenders of the production *Opinião* in 1964,<sup>16</sup> was also present on the stage.

Interestingly, this contemporary montage doesn't stick to the principles of the Theatre of the Oppressed that marked the original production. It returns to the darkened auditorium and proscenium arch theatre, with artists in an elevated position, in front of the audience. The artists no longer represent distinct social classes from the Brazilian social mosaic. Joyce and the members of the groups Casuarina, as well as Sergio Cabral, represent the carioca middle-class. Not one Afro-Brazilian or Northeasterner.

Although many of the Brazilian social problems denounced in the original show continue to be a reality 50 years after the coup, a choice was made in this remake to focus purely on the aesthetic aspect of the songs, without any mention of these problems in the small intervals of dialogue. Social inequality, migration, forced eviction of favela-dwellers, discussions on national culture, themes which formed the backbone of *Opinião* in 1964, and which still play a part in Brazilian criticism, were totally left out.

Likewise the original production, this performance 50 years after also uses the talk interaction among the artists. However, these interactions —specifically by Joyce and Sergio Cabral, because Casuarina is only present onstage to sing and play— deconstruct, indeed, the protest value of the show of 1964. Even while celebrating the event, the recreation of *Opinião* works almost as an alienated response to itself.

In apparent contradiction to what was declared by the singer Zé Keti himself, Sergio Cabral confirms at a certain point in the show that Zé Keti wasn't aware that he was protesting in the montage of 1964, creating the impression that the contesting function of the original show was much more accidental than intentional.

<sup>16</sup> The show is available online at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUaBG-VwqLM>> (15.10.2015).

The production of the show in 2014, much more sophisticated and careful than its original, encourages a disciplined reading of the songs, with elaborate arrangements that are extremely well executed by Casuarina. Nothing compared to the spontaneity of the first proposal of the show. Ultimately, from a piece of musical theatre, a popular music concert was formed, beautiful in its own right, but devoid of the argumentative charge with which it was created.

This reenaction is extremely relevant to Brazil's political and artistic portrait 50 years after the coup that installed the dictatorship and 30 years after the redemocratization. Even with the democratic and social advances achieved by the country, the critical voice of art seems to agree with Tinhorão, who in the same article cited for his criticism of *Opinião* in 1964, says:

Os jovens universitários entusiastas do “show” *Opinião* se formarão em suas carreiras e ingressarão no processo econômico prestando serviços à burguesia industrial. Os que não conseguirem bons postos ficarão na oposição. Como resultado do novo quadro econômico, as camadas da classe média sofrerão outro abalo. O novo abalo trará a necessidade de engajamento em uma linha de ideologia e de cultura capaz de afirmar sua posição na estrutura vigente. Os elementos mais credenciados da classe média descobrirão que a sua classe não possui uma cultura própria. Então, alguém se lembrará de que o negócio é tentar uma aproximação com o povo, porque, como ele continua sem mudança no seu trabalho mecânico, é nele que se conserva o resíduo da tradição e é na sua cultura autêntica que está a chave capaz de abrir o caminho para urna consciência nacional (Tinhorão 1964: sp).<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSION

According to the writers of *Opinião*, the show had two intentions: one would be to bring to the stage the debate about social, economic and political reality in Brazil, showing how much the theatre was a well-suited space to stage reality and in this way, transform it; the other would be to bring about a debate on the identity of Brazilian music, integrating different forms of music at the time, creating with this a debate about nationality itself.

In this sense, the show *Opinião* was a milestone for post-1964 Brazilian culture. It is difficult to find a book, an essay or a documentary about the time that doesn't cite it. It is a significant and rich spectacle, which with every reading reveals relevant aspects

<sup>17</sup> “The young university student's enthusiasts of the show *Opinião* will graduate in their subjects and enter the economic process, lending their services to the industrial bourgeois. Those that don't get good positions will remain in the opposition. As a result of the new economic situation, those of the middle class will suffer another shock. The new shock will bring with it the necessity to engage in a line of ideology and culture capable of confirming their position in that structure. The most accredited members of the middle class will discover that their class doesn't have its own culture. So, someone will remember that the point is to become closer to the people, because, as they continue without change in their mechanical work, it is in them that the residue of tradition is conserved, and it is their authentic culture that is capable of opening the door to a national consciousness.”

of the historical context in which it was created. Its influence is still felt in the direction taken by Brazilian theatre in the years that followed and in the general engagement of art in the agenda of protest against the military regime.

Even being created without the objective to react and contest the coup and the military regime in March of 1964, *Opinião* occupies the position of having been the first artistic reaction to the regime and formed what would be a model for creative, ironic and productive protest that would be recurrent in many artistic expressions that would follow.

The reenactment of *Opinião* in 2014 missed the opportunity to read the piece with critical eyes after 50 years of history by removing the original play's discursive force and appropriating the songs as products and not as processes of criticism and instruments of transformation.

50 years after the revolution of *Opinião* many of the problems strongly dealt with by the show are still present in Brazilian society, visible perhaps not in Samba and Baião, but in Funk and Tecno-Brega, forms of musical expression left out of the discourse of nationality because of their social origins. 50 years later, we apparently need a new *Opinião*.

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